Churches and Religion

Romania

1.

Digest

I. Prior to 1919

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The available evidence indicate that Christianity had been well established on the territory of the present day Romania in the second century. The region designated as Dacia, a province of the Roman Empire, had, between 106 and the end of the third century, an organized church with an established hierarchy. A bishop of "Gothic Dacia", (the name of this region after the withdrawal of the Roman legions) took part at the first Ecumenical Council at Nicea 325 A.D. Also, a Gothic Dacian bishop is mentioned among those present at the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, 381 A. D. We do not possess any particular information concerning the Christianity in this region from the 5th until the 13th century. This was the period of barbarian invasion which destroyed organized social life and forced the great majority of the population to seek refuge in the mountains.

The available informations for the beginning of the 13th century show the church of that region as being a part of the Eastern Orthodox Church. From that time on and until the second half of the 19th century the Romanian Eastern Orthodox Church was under the ecumenical Patriarchy of Constantinople. This applies not only to the canonical and dogmatic matters but also to the investiture (appointment of high dignitaries of the

795 part of Northern Bessarabia.

c) Armenian Uniates called also Roman Catholic of Armenian rite.

Each of these churches came under the supremacy of the Pope at a different time and under slightly different conditions. Only the Romanian Greek Catholics are dealt with in the present chapter (for others see infra III, 5).

175 795 779 The union of the Greek Orthodox Romanians by nationality with the Roman Catholic Church was accomplished by an agreement in 1698 between the Vatican and the Orthodox Bishopric of Alba-Julia, ratified later, by the Pope. In joining the Catholic Church, this fraction of the Greek Orthodox Church, however, reserved, among other things, the right to officiate at the services in the Romanian language, and the right of the clergymen to marry. In exchange, the Uniates admitted four dogmatic points of the Catholics, among which the more important were the acceptance of the Pope's supremacy and the Filioque. This union was a result of a compromise accepted by the Holy See in view of circumstances which prevailed in Hungary in particular in Transylvania and Banat in the 17th century. Several political causes contributed to this union. To mention the principal ones, the Hungarian kings endeavored to convert the Romanian minority to Catholicism and thus to detach it from the influence of Romanian Principalities. The spreading of protestantism among the German minority in Transylvania presented a possibility of swaying the Romanians to the same religion.